

**“CHURCH OR CHRIST”  
Pastor Mike Corwin****TEXT:** MATTHEW 20:29-34**GOD’S WORD:** HEBREWS 13:1-3**I – TEXT:**

Our Scripture this morning comes from the Gospel of Matthew. It’s words are over 2,000 years old...but it’s meaning...it’s message is for this place and this time.

**Matthew 20:29-34 (NLT)**

<sup>29</sup> As Jesus and the disciples left the town of Jericho, a large crowd followed behind. <sup>30</sup> Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

<sup>31</sup> “Be quiet!” the crowd yelled at them.

But they only shouted louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

<sup>32</sup> When Jesus heard them, he stopped and called, “What do you want me to do for you?”

<sup>33</sup> “Lord,” they said, “we want to see!” <sup>34</sup> Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

Jesus sets out this day on his final human journey. He sets out for the city of Jerusalem. Jericho is a one day trip and Jesus must go because he has a mission from his Father to complete this week. He must die this week during the Jewish observance of Passover. Tomorrow he will ride into the city on a donkey as the people praise him and call him their King but on Friday they will call for his death and he will die on a Roman Cross. But he doesn’t walk away from the city, he walks towards it to carry out his mission.

Many people followed him down the road. Some were his disciples, some were his followers, but a vast number of them were ordinary people taking the same journey he was taking, but not the same mission. They were in route to the Holy City to do their religious duty and observe the Passover there.

On his way he encounters two blind men. They were sitting along the side of the road and probably begging. That’s most likely how they survived. There was no Americans with Disability Act in that time and place. They were not acceptable to work and had to beg to cloth and feed themselves.

When they hear that Jesus is walking towards them they start yelling for him. They know his reputation and have heard of all the miraculous healings he has done. They want him to stop and do one of his miracles on their eyes. They want to work. They want to be self-sufficient. They don't like living off the generosity of others. It's only their circumstances that are hindering them and holding them back. Only their blindness is keeping them from being self-sufficient and in the normal paths of society. If Jesus cures their blindness they'll be "normal."

The crowd yells back at them and tells them to be quiet. How dare they interrupt Jesus on his way to his mission, how dare they interrupt the rest of the people from their holy pilgrimage. But these two just yell all the louder. They don't settle down, they don't care what the decorum is they are supposed to follow when Jesus is around. All they know is they need Jesus!

And Jesus didn't disappoint them. He stopped, talked to them to see what they needed, and then he healed them.

## **II – PEOPLE – NOT – AGENDAS:**

In this Scripture I see an example the church needs to learn over and over again. It's not about agenda's it's all about people. People – not programs. It's about ministry – not meetings.

Think about this Scripture. Jesus has an agenda this day. He sets out to complete the mission God gave him as he sent him to earth. And I think it's a pretty important agenda. He is to go to the Holy City where he was to be arrested, tried, humiliated, beaten, crucified, and buried. Through his obedience to God's will all the rest of humanity then, now, and in the future, will be delivered from their sins and will conquer death. I think that's a pretty good agenda for you and for me. Millions and millions of lives hang in the balance of him following the agenda. But he didn't!

He allowed himself to hear the pleas of two people who needed his help. And help he did. He didn't assign one of the disciples to do it for him. He didn't explain that he was in the middle of an important mission trip, he didn't tell them to wait until the Sabbath He stopped and healed them. They needed him now...and he responded to them now. Jesus would answer the call to die...but first he had to handle this ministry opportunity.

## **III – CHURCH OR CHRIST:**

The example given to us by Jesus in this story answers the question in the title of today's message, "Church or Christ." We were reminded last week at Annual Conference by the Bishop who stated "THE CHURCH IS NOT THE MISSION, THE CHURCH IS AN INSTRUMENT TO BE USED IN THE MISSION OF MAKING DISCIPLES FOR JESUS CHRIST." It's not about the building...it's about the people. Don't get me wrong – we need the building. The building acts like a home base. The building is a place to come and celebrate. The building is a place where we can teach the lessons of our faith. A place where people can come and learn as they become and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ. But our mission is not to put all of our time and resources into the building. Our mission is to take care of those who are still outside of the building, those who have no idea who Jesus is and how he can help answer their problems in life. This place is to equip you and charge your souls so you can go out and do ministry.

Outside these walls are:

- People without a home
- People without a family
- People who live in poverty
- People who can't eat right
- People who are bullied
- People who have dire health conditions and can't get the proper medications or treatment
- People who suffer from mental illness
- People who are seeking simple love or friendship
- People who have suffered at the hands of someone they trusted or even loved
- People who have been written off by their family, by their government, by the church
- People who are treated different because they are different.
- Probably the most disheartening one of all...People without HOPE.

Here's where I see Jesus giving us the answer. As Jesus walked down that road that day. I'm sure he had an agenda. I'm sure his mind was looking ahead and playing out all the possible scenarios that would take place in the coming weeks. How he would sign his own death warrant by upsetting the finances of the Temple and the Pharisees. What questions would he be asked by the religious rulers, how would the Romans treat him, how bad would he get beaten, how painful was it to be crucified. And yet when two blind beggars asked for his help, he put his agenda aside and showed them what the Kingdom of God looked like. How can we as the church do any less?

**IV – NEW VISION:**

I recently had this same lesson taught to me again. It's God's lesson and he used some folk here to teach it.

In 2016 on Christmas Eve I preached about "The Light" that Jesus was bringing to the world and set us on the path of shining that light into the darkness of Bucyrus. We spent some time the first part of 2017 discerning what we thought were the five greatest areas of darkness that the community of Bucyrus faced and put them in order of their importance. You all signed up to work in different areas as we came to them. But then the momentum shifted. I can almost say it stopped. I tried numerous times to schedule meetings to address the issues but something always came up. Another need arose and the meetings/gatherings never took place. As I was getting ready to get it done at all costs I had to take a Sabbatical. I finally got one scheduled in April of this year and two people attended. I have to tell you that I was pretty discouraged. All that work and so far no results. But now I know why. God was telling me I was on the wrong path. That my agenda was not his.

That week I had a prayer team meeting and I explained what had happened and how two people came to the meeting. I asked them to pray about to for the month to get the church motivated to carry through with it. I got a text later that day from one of the members who said that she had gone home and shared the information with her husband, who is also on the prayer team, and he said we should be looking at "PREVENTION NOT INTERVENTION." That we need to focus more on the light and less on the darkness. Take Jesus to the community and his light will overcome the darkness...not ours. The prayer team prayed about it and came back the following month with the confirmation that this was God's path. The other part of our new vision is to become disciples. To become mature disciples. One of the speakers laid this on our hearts. "JESUS DID NOT SAY WE SHOULD BELIEVE AND BEHAVE. HE SAID "FOLLOW ME.""

## **V – CARRY OUT THE MISSION / VISION:**

I have no idea how this new vision will play out. I know we're seeing some of it as we concentrate on our youth. If Jesus touches them now they will not be overcome by the darkness later. I am excited to develop it all with God's direction and your help.

I do know that we need to remember the lesson Jesus teaches us this day. The church tried to shush the two in need...Jesus healed them. We need to quit shushing and ignoring those in need and instead help them as we can and most importantly show them Jesus.

Then amazing things happen. The concluding part of the Scripture says that after Jesus touched them and healed them "THEN THEY FOLLOWED HIM." I want people to be touched by Jesus and healed by Jesus. I want them and our congregation and our youth to find the Hope they need to face this world. And we won't do that by following an agenda...we'll do it by following Jesus. AMEN